

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1215

AN ACT

To improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

2 (a) **SHORT TITLE.**—This Act may be cited as the
3 “Protecting Access to Care Act of 2017”.

4 (b) **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**—The table of contents of
5 this Act is as follows:

- Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.
- Sec. 2. Encouraging speedy resolution of claims.
- Sec. 3. Compensating patient injury.
- Sec. 4. Maximizing patient recovery.
- Sec. 5. Authorization of payment of future damages to claimants in health care lawsuits.
- Sec. 6. Product liability for health care providers.
- Sec. 7. Definitions.
- Sec. 8. Effect on other laws.
- Sec. 9. Rules of construction.
- Sec. 10. Effective date.
- Sec. 11. Limitation on expert witness testimony.
- Sec. 12. Communications following unanticipated outcome.
- Sec. 13. Expert witness qualifications.
- Sec. 14. Affidavit of merit.
- Sec. 15. Notice of intent to commence lawsuit.

6 **SEC. 2. ENCOURAGING SPEEDY RESOLUTION OF CLAIMS.**

7 (a) **STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS.**—

8 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—Except as provided in para-
9 graph (2), the time for the commencement of a
10 health care lawsuit shall be, whichever occurs first of
11 the following:

12 (A) 3 years after the date of the occur-
13 rence of the breach or tort;

14 (B) 3 years after the date the medical or
15 health care treatment that is the subject of the
16 claim is completed; or

1 (C) 1 year after the claimant discovers, or
2 through the use of reasonable diligence should
3 have discovered, the injury.

4 (2) TOLLING.—In no event shall the time for
5 commencement of a health care lawsuit exceed 3
6 years after the date of the occurrence of the breach
7 or tort or 3 years after the date the medical or
8 health care treatment that is the subject of the claim
9 is completed (whichever occurs first) unless tolled
10 for any of the following—

11 (A) upon proof of fraud;

12 (B) intentional concealment; or

13 (C) the presence of a foreign body, which
14 has no therapeutic or diagnostic purpose or ef-
15 fect, in the person of the injured person.

16 (3) ACTIONS BY A MINOR.—Actions by a minor
17 shall be commenced within 3 years after the date of
18 the occurrence of the breach or tort or 3 years after
19 the date of the medical or health care treatment that
20 is the subject of the claim is completed (whichever
21 occurs first) except that actions by a minor under
22 the full age of 6 years shall be commenced within 3
23 years after the date of the occurrence of the breach
24 or tort, 3 years after the date of the medical or
25 health care treatment that is the subject of the claim

1 is completed, or 1 year after the injury is discovered,
2 or through the use of reasonable diligence should
3 have been discovered, or prior to the minor's 8th
4 birthday, whichever provides a longer period. Such
5 time limitation shall be tolled for minors for any pe-
6 riod during which a parent or guardian and a health
7 care provider have committed fraud or collusion in
8 the failure to bring an action on behalf of the in-
9 jured minor.

10 (b) STATE FLEXIBILITY.—No provision of subsection
11 (a) shall be construed to preempt any state law (whether
12 effective before, on, or after the date of the enactment of
13 this Act) that—

14 (1) specifies a time period of less than 3 years
15 after the date of injury or less than 1 year after the
16 claimant discovers, or through the use of reasonable
17 diligence should have discovered, the injury, for the
18 filing of a health care lawsuit;

19 (2) that specifies a different time period for the
20 filing of lawsuits by a minor;

21 (3) that triggers the time period based on the
22 date of the alleged negligence; or

23 (4) establishes a statute of repose for the filing
24 of health care lawsuit.

1 **SEC. 3. COMPENSATING PATIENT INJURY.**

2 (a) UNLIMITED AMOUNT OF DAMAGES FOR ACTUAL
3 ECONOMIC LOSSES IN HEALTH CARE LAWSUITS.—In any
4 health care lawsuit, nothing in this Act shall limit a claim-
5 ant’s recovery of the full amount of the available economic
6 damages, notwithstanding the limitation in subsection (b).

7 (b) ADDITIONAL NONECONOMIC DAMAGES.—In any
8 health care lawsuit, the amount of noneconomic damages,
9 if available, shall not exceed \$250,000, regardless of the
10 number of parties against whom the action is brought or
11 the number of separate claims or actions brought with re-
12 spect to the same injury.

13 (c) NO DISCOUNT OF AWARD FOR NONECONOMIC
14 DAMAGES.—For purposes of applying the limitation in
15 subsection (b), future noneconomic damages shall not be
16 discounted to present value. The jury shall not be in-
17 formed about the maximum award for noneconomic dam-
18 ages. An award for noneconomic damages in excess of
19 \$250,000 shall be reduced either before the entry of judg-
20 ment, or by amendment of the judgment after entry of
21 judgment, and such reduction shall be made before ac-
22 counting for any other reduction in damages required by
23 law. If separate awards are rendered for past and future
24 noneconomic damages and the combined awards exceed
25 \$250,000, the future noneconomic damages shall be re-
26 duced first.

1 (d) FAIR SHARE RULE.—In any health care lawsuit,
2 each party shall be liable for that party’s several share
3 of any damages only and not for the share of any other
4 person. Each party shall be liable only for the amount of
5 damages allocated to such party in direct proportion to
6 such party’s percentage of responsibility. Whenever a
7 judgment of liability is rendered as to any party, a sepa-
8 rate judgment shall be rendered against each such party
9 for the amount allocated to such party. For purposes of
10 this section, the trier of fact shall determine the propor-
11 tion of responsibility of each party for the claimant’s
12 harm.

13 (e) STATE FLEXIBILITY.—No provision of this sec-
14 tion shall be construed to preempt any State law (whether
15 effective before, on, or after the date of the enactment of
16 this Act) that specifies a particular monetary amount of
17 economic or noneconomic damages (or the total amount
18 of damages) that may be awarded in a health care lawsuit,
19 regardless of whether such monetary amount is greater
20 or lesser than is provided for under this section.

21 **SEC. 4. MAXIMIZING PATIENT RECOVERY.**

22 (a) COURT SUPERVISION OF SHARE OF DAMAGES
23 ACTUALLY PAID TO CLAIMANTS.—In any health care law-
24 suit, the court shall supervise the arrangements for pay-
25 ment of damages to protect against conflicts of interest

1 that may have the effect of reducing the amount of dam-
2 ages awarded that are actually paid to claimants. In par-
3 ticular, in any health care lawsuit in which the attorney
4 for a party claims a financial stake in the outcome by vir-
5 tue of a contingent fee, the court shall have the power
6 to restrict the payment of a claimant's damage recovery
7 to such attorney, and to redirect such damages to the
8 claimant based upon the interests of justice and principles
9 of equity. In no event shall the total of all contingent fees
10 for representing all claimants in a health care lawsuit ex-
11 ceed the following limits:

12 (1) Forty percent of the first \$50,000 recovered
13 by the claimant(s).

14 (2) Thirty-three and one-third percent of the
15 next \$50,000 recovered by the claimant(s).

16 (3) Twenty-five percent of the next \$500,000
17 recovered by the claimant(s).

18 (4) Fifteen percent of any amount by which the
19 recovery by the claimant(s) is in excess of \$600,000.

20 (b) APPLICABILITY.—The limitations in this section
21 shall apply whether the recovery is by judgment, settle-
22 ment, mediation, arbitration, or any other form of alter-
23 native dispute resolution. In a health care lawsuit involv-
24 ing a minor or incompetent person, a court retains the
25 authority to authorize or approve a fee that is less than

1 the maximum permitted under this section. The require-
2 ment for court supervision in the first two sentences of
3 subsection (a) applies only in civil actions.

4 (c) STATE FLEXIBILITY.—No provision of this sec-
5 tion shall be construed to preempt any State law (whether
6 effective before, on, or after the date of the enactment of
7 this Act) that specifies a lesser percentage or lesser total
8 value of damages which may be claimed by an attorney
9 representing a claimant in a health care lawsuit.

10 **SEC. 5. AUTHORIZATION OF PAYMENT OF FUTURE DAM-**
11 **AGES TO CLAIMANTS IN HEALTH CARE LAW-**
12 **SUITS.**

13 (a) IN GENERAL.—In any health care lawsuit, if an
14 award of future damages, without reduction to present
15 value, equaling or exceeding \$50,000 is made against a
16 party with sufficient insurance or other assets to fund a
17 periodic payment of such a judgment, the court shall, at
18 the request of any party, enter a judgment ordering that
19 the future damages be paid by periodic payments, in ac-
20 cordance with the Uniform Periodic Payment of Judg-
21 ments Act promulgated by the National Conference of
22 Commissioners on Uniform State Laws.

23 (b) APPLICABILITY.—This section applies to all ac-
24 tions which have not been first set for trial or retrial be-
25 fore the effective date of this Act.

1 (c) STATE FLEXIBILITY.—No provision of this sec-
2 tion shall be construed to preempt any State law (whether
3 effective before, on, or after the date of the enactment of
4 this Act) that specifies periodic payments for future dam-
5 ages at any amount other than \$50,000 or that mandates
6 such payments absent the request of either party.

7 **SEC. 6. PRODUCT LIABILITY FOR HEALTH CARE PRO-**
8 **VIDERS.**

9 A health care provider who prescribes, or who dis-
10 penses pursuant to a prescription, a medical product ap-
11 proved, licensed, or cleared by the Food and Drug Admin-
12 istration shall not be named as a party to a product liabil-
13 ity lawsuit involving such product and shall not be liable
14 to a claimant in a class action lawsuit against the manu-
15 facturer, distributor, or seller of such product.

16 **SEC. 7. DEFINITIONS.**

17 In this Act:

18 (1) ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION SYS-
19 TEM; ADR.—The term “alternative dispute resolution
20 system” or “ADR” means a system that provides
21 for the resolution of health care lawsuits in a man-
22 ner other than through a civil action brought in a
23 State or Federal court.

24 (2) CLAIMANT.—The term “claimant” means
25 any person who brings a health care lawsuit, includ-

1 ing a person who asserts or claims a right to legal
2 or equitable contribution, indemnity, or subrogation,
3 arising out of a health care liability claim or action,
4 and any person on whose behalf such a claim is as-
5 serted or such an action is brought, whether de-
6 ceased, incompetent, or a minor.

7 (3) COLLATERAL SOURCE BENEFITS.—The
8 term “collateral source benefits” means any amount
9 paid or reasonably likely to be paid in the future to
10 or on behalf of the claimant, or any service, product,
11 or other benefit provided or reasonably likely to be
12 provided in the future to or on behalf of the claim-
13 ant, as a result of the injury or wrongful death, pur-
14 suant to—

15 (A) any State or Federal health, sickness,
16 income-disability, accident, or workers’ com-
17 pensation law;

18 (B) any health, sickness, income-disability,
19 or accident insurance that provides health bene-
20 fits or income-disability coverage;

21 (C) any contract or agreement of any
22 group, organization, partnership, or corporation
23 to provide, pay for, or reimburse the cost of
24 medical, hospital, dental, or income-disability
25 benefits; and

1 (D) any other publicly or privately funded
2 program.

3 (4) CONTINGENT FEE.—The term “contingent
4 fee” includes all compensation to any person or per-
5 sons which is payable only if a recovery is effected
6 on behalf of one or more claimants.

7 (5) ECONOMIC DAMAGES.—The term “economic
8 damages” means objectively verifiable monetary
9 losses incurred as a result of the provision or use of
10 (or failure to provide or use) health care services or
11 medical products, such as past and future medical
12 expenses, loss of past and future earnings, cost of
13 obtaining domestic services, loss of employment, and
14 loss of business or employment opportunities, unless
15 otherwise defined under applicable state law. In no
16 circumstances shall damages for health care services
17 or medical products exceed the amount actually paid
18 or incurred by or on behalf of the claimant.

19 (6) FUTURE DAMAGES.—The term “future
20 damages” means any damages that are incurred
21 after the date of judgment, settlement, or other reso-
22 lution (including mediation, or any other form of al-
23 ternative dispute resolution).

24 (7) HEALTH CARE LAWSUIT.—The term
25 “health care lawsuit” means any health care liability

1 claim concerning the provision of goods or services
2 for which coverage was provided in whole or in part
3 via a Federal program, subsidy or tax benefit, or
4 any health care liability action concerning the provi-
5 sion of goods or services for which coverage was pro-
6 vided in whole or in part via a Federal program,
7 subsidy or tax benefit, brought in a State or Federal
8 court or pursuant to an alternative dispute resolu-
9 tion system, against a health care provider regard-
10 less of the theory of liability on which the claim is
11 based, or the number of claimants, plaintiffs, de-
12 fendants, or other parties, or the number of claims
13 or causes of action, in which the claimant alleges a
14 health care liability claim. Such term does not in-
15 clude a claim or action which is based on criminal
16 liability; which seeks civil fines or penalties paid to
17 Federal, State, or local government; or which is
18 grounded in antitrust.

19 (8) HEALTH CARE LIABILITY ACTION.—The
20 term “health care liability action” means a civil ac-
21 tion brought in a State or Federal court or pursuant
22 to an alternative dispute resolution system, against
23 a health care provider regardless of the theory of li-
24 ability on which the claim is based, or the number
25 of plaintiffs, defendants, or other parties, or the

1 number of causes of action, in which the claimant al-
2 leges a health care liability claim.

3 (9) HEALTH CARE LIABILITY CLAIM.—The
4 term “health care liability claim” means a demand
5 by any person, whether or not pursuant to ADR,
6 against a health care provider, including, but not
7 limited to, third-party claims, cross-claims, counter-
8 claims, or contribution claims, which are based upon
9 the provision or use of (or the failure to provide or
10 use) health care services or medical products, re-
11 gardless of the theory of liability on which the claim
12 is based, or the number of plaintiffs, defendants, or
13 other parties, or the number of causes of action.

14 (10) HEALTH CARE PROVIDER.—The term
15 “health care provider” means any person or entity
16 required by State or Federal laws or regulations to
17 be licensed, registered, or certified to provide health
18 care services, and being either so licensed, reg-
19 istered, or certified, or exempted from such require-
20 ment by other statute or regulation, as well as any
21 other individual or entity defined as a health care
22 provider, health care professional, or health care in-
23 stitution under state law.

24 (11) HEALTH CARE SERVICES.—The term
25 “health care services” means the provision of any

1 goods or services (including safety, professional, or
2 administrative services directly related to health
3 care) by a health care provider, or by any individual
4 working under the supervision of a health care pro-
5 vider, that relates to the diagnosis, prevention, or
6 treatment of any human disease or impairment, or
7 the assessment or care of the health of human
8 beings.

9 (12) MEDICAL PRODUCT.—The term “medical
10 product” means a drug, device, or biological product
11 intended for humans, and the terms “drug”, “de-
12 vice”, and “biological product” have the meanings
13 given such terms in sections 201(g)(1) and 201(h)
14 of the Federal Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act (21
15 U.S.C. 321(g)(1) and (h)) and section 351(a) of the
16 Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 262(a)), re-
17 spectively, including any component or raw material
18 used therein, but excluding health care services.

19 (13) NONECONOMIC DAMAGES.—The term
20 “noneconomic damages” means damages for phys-
21 ical and emotional pain, suffering, inconvenience,
22 physical impairment, mental anguish, disfigurement,
23 loss of enjoyment of life, loss of society and compan-
24 ionship, loss of consortium (other than loss of do-
25 mestic service), hedonic damages, injury to reputa-

1 tion, and all other nonpecuniary losses of any kind
2 or nature incurred as a result of the provision or use
3 of (or failure to provide or use) health care services
4 or medical products, unless otherwise defined under
5 applicable state law.

6 (14) RECOVERY.—The term “recovery” means
7 the net sum recovered after deducting any disburse-
8 ments or costs incurred in connection with prosecu-
9 tion or settlement of the claim, including all costs
10 paid or advanced by any person. Costs of health care
11 incurred by the plaintiff and the attorneys’ office
12 overhead costs or charges for legal services are not
13 deductible disbursements or costs for such purpose.

14 (15) REPRESENTATIVE.—The term “represent-
15 ative” means a legal guardian, attorney, person des-
16 ignated to make decisions on behalf of a patient
17 under a medical power of attorney, or any person
18 recognized in law or custom as a patient’s agent.

19 (16) STATE.—The term “State” means each of
20 the several States, the District of Columbia, the
21 Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands,
22 Guam, American Samoa, the Northern Mariana Is-
23 lands, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, and
24 any other territory or possession of the United
25 States, or any political subdivision thereof.

1 **SEC. 8. EFFECT ON OTHER LAWS.**

2 (a) VACCINE INJURY.—

3 (1) To the extent that title XXI of the Public
4 Health Service Act establishes a Federal rule of law
5 applicable to a civil action brought for a vaccine-re-
6 lated injury or death—

7 (A) this Act does not affect the application
8 of the rule of law to such an action; and

9 (B) any rule of law prescribed by this Act
10 in conflict with a rule of law of such title XXI
11 shall not apply to such action.

12 (2) If there is an aspect of a civil action
13 brought for a vaccine-related injury or death to
14 which a Federal rule of law under title XXI of the
15 Public Health Service Act does not apply, then this
16 Act or otherwise applicable law (as determined
17 under this Act) will apply to such aspect of such ac-
18 tion.

19 (b) OTHER FEDERAL LAW.—Except as provided in
20 this section, nothing in this Act shall be deemed to affect
21 any defense available to a defendant in a health care law-
22 suit or action under any other provision of Federal law.

23 **SEC. 9. RULES OF CONSTRUCTION.**

24 (a) HEALTH CARE LAWSUITS.—Unless otherwise
25 specified in this Act, the provisions governing health care
26 lawsuits set forth in this Act preempt, subject to sub-

1 sections (b) and (c), State law to the extent that State
2 law prevents the application of any provisions of law estab-
3 lished by or under this Act. The provisions governing
4 health care lawsuits set forth in this Act supersede chapter
5 171 of title 28, United States Code, to the extent that
6 such chapter—

7 (1) provides for a greater amount of damages
8 or contingent fees, a longer period in which a health
9 care lawsuit may be commenced, or a reduced appli-
10 cability or scope of periodic payment of future dam-
11 ages, than provided in this Act; or

12 (2) prohibits the introduction of evidence re-
13 garding collateral source benefits, or mandates or
14 permits subrogation or a lien on collateral source
15 benefits.

16 (b) PROTECTION OF STATES' RIGHTS AND OTHER
17 LAWS.—Any issue that is not governed by any provision
18 of law established by or under this Act (including State
19 standards of negligence) shall be governed by otherwise
20 applicable State or Federal law.

21 (c) STATE FLEXIBILITY.—No provision of this Act
22 shall be construed to preempt any defense available to a
23 party in a health care lawsuit under any other provision
24 of State or Federal law.

1 **SEC. 10. EFFECTIVE DATE.**

2 This Act shall apply to any health care lawsuit
3 brought in a Federal or State court, or subject to an alter-
4 native dispute resolution system, that is initiated on or
5 after the date of the enactment of this Act, except that
6 any health care lawsuit arising from an injury occurring
7 prior to the date of the enactment of this Act shall be
8 governed by the applicable statute of limitations provisions
9 in effect at the time the cause of action accrued.

10 **SEC. 11. LIMITATION ON EXPERT WITNESS TESTIMONY.**

11 (a) IN GENERAL.—No person in a health care profes-
12 sion requiring licensure under the laws of a State shall
13 be competent to testify in any court of law to establish
14 the following facts—

15 (1) the recognized standard of acceptable pro-
16 fessional practice and the specialty thereof, if any,
17 that the defendant practices, which shall be the type
18 of acceptable professional practice recognized in the
19 defendant's community or in a community similar to
20 the defendant's community that was in place at the
21 time the alleged injury or wrongful action occurred;

22 (2) that the defendant acted with less than or
23 failed to act with ordinary and reasonable care in ac-
24 cordance with the recognized standard; and

25 (3) that as a proximate result of the defend-
26 ant's negligent act or omission, the claimant suf-

1 ferred injuries which would not otherwise have oc-
2 curred,
3 unless the person was licensed to practice, in the State
4 or a contiguous bordering State, a profession or specialty
5 which would make the person's expert testimony relevant
6 to the issues in the case and had practiced this profession
7 or specialty in one of these States during the year pre-
8 ceding the date that the alleged injury or wrongful act
9 occurred.

10 (b) **APPLICABILITY.**—The requirements set forth in
11 subsection (a) shall also apply to expert witnesses testi-
12 fying for the defendant as rebuttal witnesses.

13 (c) **WAIVER AUTHORITY.**—The court may waive the
14 requirements in this subsection if it determines that the
15 appropriate witnesses otherwise would not be available.

16 **SEC. 12. COMMUNICATIONS FOLLOWING UNANTICIPATED**
17 **OUTCOME.**

18 (a) **PROVIDER COMMUNICATIONS.**—In any health
19 care liability action, any and all statements, affirmations,
20 gestures, or conduct expressing apology, fault, sympathy,
21 commiseration, condolence, compassion, or a general sense
22 of benevolence which are made by a health care provider
23 or an employee of a health care provider to the patient,
24 a relative of the patient, or a representative of the patient
25 and which relate to the discomfort, pain, suffering, injury,

1 or death of the patient as the result of the unanticipated
2 outcome of medical care shall be inadmissible for any pur-
3 pose as evidence of an admission of liability or as evidence
4 of an admission against interest.

5 (b) STATE FLEXIBILITY.—No provision of this sec-
6 tion shall be construed to preempt any State law (whether
7 effective before, on, or after the date of the enactment of
8 this Act) that makes additional communications inadmis-
9 sible as evidence of an admission of liability or as evidence
10 of an admission against interest.

11 **SEC. 13. EXPERT WITNESS QUALIFICATIONS.**

12 (a) IN GENERAL.—In any health care lawsuit, an in-
13 dividual shall not give expert testimony on the appropriate
14 standard of practice or care involved unless the individual
15 is licensed as a health professional in one or more States
16 and the individual meets the following criteria:

17 (1) If the party against whom or on whose be-
18 half the testimony is to be offered is or claims to be
19 a specialist, the expert witness shall specialize at the
20 time of the occurrence that is the basis for the law-
21 suit in the same specialty or claimed specialty as the
22 party against whom or on whose behalf the testi-
23 mony is to be offered. If the party against whom or
24 on whose behalf the testimony is to be offered is or
25 claims to be a specialist who is board certified, the

1 expert witness shall be a specialist who is board cer-
2 tified in that specialty or claimed specialty.

3 (2) During the 1-year period immediately pre-
4 ceding the occurrence of the action that gave rise to
5 the lawsuit, the expert witness shall have devoted a
6 majority of the individual's professional time to one
7 or more of the following:

8 (A) The active clinical practice of the same
9 health profession as the defendant and, if the
10 defendant is or claims to be a specialist, in the
11 same specialty or claimed specialty.

12 (B) The instruction of students in an ac-
13 credited health professional school or accredited
14 residency or clinical research program in the
15 same health profession as the defendant and, if
16 the defendant is or claims to be a specialist, in
17 an accredited health professional school or ac-
18 credited residency or clinical research program
19 in the same specialty or claimed specialty.

20 (3) If the defendant is a general practitioner,
21 the expert witness shall have devoted a majority of
22 the witness's professional time in the 1-year period
23 preceding the occurrence of the action giving rise to
24 the lawsuit to one or more of the following:

1 (A) Active clinical practice as a general
2 practitioner.

3 (B) Instruction of students in an accred-
4 ited health professional school or accredited
5 residency or clinical research program in the
6 same health profession as the defendant.

7 (b) LAWSUITS AGAINST ENTITIES.—If the defendant
8 in a health care lawsuit is an entity that employs a person
9 against whom or on whose behalf the testimony is offered,
10 the provisions of subsection (a) apply as if the person were
11 the party or defendant against whom or on whose behalf
12 the testimony is offered.

13 (c) POWER OF COURT.—Nothing in this subsection
14 shall limit the power of the trial court in a health care
15 lawsuit to disqualify an expert witness on grounds other
16 than the qualifications set forth under this subsection.

17 (d) LIMITATION.—An expert witness in a health care
18 lawsuit shall not be permitted to testify if the fee of the
19 witness is in any way contingent on the outcome of the
20 lawsuit.

21 (e) STATE FLEXIBILITY.—No provision of this sec-
22 tion shall be construed to preempt any State law (whether
23 effective before, on, or after the date of the enactment of
24 this Act) that places additional qualification requirements
25 upon any individual testifying as an expert witness.

1 **SEC. 14. AFFIDAVIT OF MERIT.**

2 (a) **REQUIRED FILING.**—Subject to subsection (b),
3 the plaintiff in a health care lawsuit alleging negligence
4 or, if the plaintiff is represented by an attorney, the plain-
5 tiff’s attorney shall file simultaneously with the health
6 care lawsuit an affidavit of merit signed by a health pro-
7 fessional who meets the requirements for an expert wit-
8 ness under section 14 of this Act. The affidavit of merit
9 shall certify that the health professional has reviewed the
10 notice and all medical records supplied to him or her by
11 the plaintiff’s attorney concerning the allegations con-
12 tained in the notice and shall contain a statement of each
13 of the following:

14 (1) The applicable standard of practice or care.

15 (2) The health professional’s opinion that the
16 applicable standard of practice or care was breached
17 by the health professional or health facility receiving
18 the notice.

19 (3) The actions that should have been taken or
20 omitted by the health professional or health facility
21 in order to have complied with the applicable stand-
22 ard of practice or care.

23 (4) The manner in which the breach of the
24 standard of practice or care was the proximate cause
25 of the injury alleged in the notice.

26 (5) A listing of the medical records reviewed.

1 (b) FILING EXTENSION.—Upon motion of a party for
2 good cause shown, the court in which the complaint is filed
3 may grant the plaintiff or, if the plaintiff is represented
4 by an attorney, the plaintiff’s attorney an additional 28
5 days in which to file the affidavit required under sub-
6 section (a).

7 (c) STATE FLEXIBILITY.—No provision of this sec-
8 tion shall be construed to preempt any State law (whether
9 effective before, on, or after the date of the enactment of
10 this Act) that establishes additional requirements for the
11 filing of an affidavit of merit or similar pre-litigation docu-
12 mentation.

13 **SEC. 15. NOTICE OF INTENT TO COMMENCE LAWSUIT.**

14 (a) ADVANCE NOTICE.—A person shall not com-
15 mence a health care lawsuit against a health care provider
16 unless the person has given the health care provider 90
17 days written notice before the action is commenced.

18 (b) EXCEPTIONS.—A health care lawsuit against a
19 health care provider filed within 6 months of the statute
20 of limitations expiring as to any claimant, or within 1 year
21 of the statute of repose expiring as to any claimant, shall
22 be exempt from compliance with this section.

23 (c) STATE FLEXIBILITY.—No provision of this sec-
24 tion shall be construed to preempt any State law (whether
25 effective before, on, or after the date of the enactment of

- 1 this Act) that establishes a different time period for the
- 2 filing of written notice.

Passed the House of Representatives June 28, 2017.

Attest:

Clerk.

115TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1215

AN ACT

To improve patient access to health care services and provide improved medical care by reducing the excessive burden the liability system places on the health care delivery system.